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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 008809

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: PM SINGH SHUFFLES PORTFOLIOS SLIGHTLY

Classified By: Political Counselor Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (SBU) In an anti-climax, the GOI announced November 18 that it had reallocated Cabinet portfolios between the sitting Cabinet Ministers rather than expanding the Cabinet as expected. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh retained the External Affairs Ministry. Jaipal Reddy moved from Information and Broadcasting to Urban Development, where he may be helpful to our infrastructure investment thrust. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi added I & B to his current Parliamentary Affairs Portfolio. The PM remains overwhelmed and dual-hatted. Political commentators were surprised that Sonia and the PM did not undertake radical surgery following the Natwar Singh scandal.

2. (U) The present composition of 62-member Union Council of Ministers, after the reshuffle:

CABINET MINISTERS (26)

Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister, is also in-charge of the following ministries/departments, currently not allocated to any other minister:

- Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions
- Planning
- Atomic Energy
- Space
- Coal
- Overseas Indian Affairs
- External Affairs

Shivraj Patil, Home Affairs
Pranab Mukherjee, Defense
P. Chidambaram, Finance
Arjun Singh, Human Resource Development
Sharad Pawar, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Lalu Prasad, Railways
Ram Vilas Paswan, Chemicals & Fertilizers and Steel
Jaipal Reddy, Urban Development & Culture
K. Chandra Shekhar Rao, Labor & Employment
Mahavir Prasad, Small Scale Industries, Agro & Rural Industries
PR. Kyndiah, Tribal Affairs & Development of North Eastern Region
TR. Baalu, Shipping; Road Transport & Highways
Shankersinh Vaghela, Textiles
Natwar Singh, Minister without Portfolio
Kamal Nath, Commerce & Industry
H.R. Bhardwaj, Law & Justice
P.M. Sayeed, Power
Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Rural Development
Priyaranjan Dashmuni, Information & Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs
Mani Shankar Aiyar, Petroleum & Natural Gas and Panchayati Raj
Mrs. Meira Kumar, Social Justice & Empowerment
Raja, Environment & Forests
Dayanidhi Maran, Communication & Information Technology
Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss, Health & Family Welfare
Sis Ram Ola, Mines

MINISTERS OF STATE WITH INDEPENDENT CHARGE (09)

Santosh Mohan Dev, Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises and Water Resources
Oscar Fernandes, Statistics & Program Implementation and Youth Affairs & Sports
Mrs. Renuka Choudhury, Tourism
Subodh Kant Sahay, Food Processing Industries
Kapil Sibal, Science & Technology and Ocean Development
Vilas Muttemwar, Non-Conventional Energy Sources
Kumari Selja, Urban Employment & Poverty Alleviation
Praful Patel, Civil Aviation
Prem Chand Gupta, Company Affairs

MINISTERS OF STATE (27)

E. Ahamed, External Affairs
Suresh Pachauri, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and Parliamentary Affairs
BK. Handique, Defense; Parliamentary Affairs
Mrs. Panabaka Lakshmi, Health & Family Welfare
Dr. Dasari Narayan Rao, Coal & Mines
Shaqeel Ahmed, Communications & Information Technology

Rao Inderjit Singh, External Affairs
Naranbhai Rathwa, Railways; Chemicals & Fertilizers
KH Muniappa, Road Transport & Highways
MV Rajashekharan, Planning
Kantilal Bhuria, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public
Distribution
Manik Rao Gavit, Home Affairs
Sri Prakash Jaiswal, Home Affairs
Prithviraj Chavan, Prime Minister's Office
Taslimuddin, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public
Distribution
Mrs. Suryakanta Patil, Rural Development; Parliamentary
Affairs
Md. Ali Ashraf Fatmi, Human Resource Development
A. Narendra, Rural Development
R. Velu, Railways
SS. Palanimanikkam, Finance
S. Regupathy, Home Affairs
K. Venkatapathy, Law & Justice
Mrs. Subbulakshmi Jegadeesan, Social Justice & Empowerment
EVK Elangovan, Commerce & Industry
Mrs. Kanti Singh, Human Resource Development
Namo Narayan Meena, Environment & Forests
Akhilesh Singh, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and
Public Distribution

Comment - Again Indecisive

13. (C) Political observers were surprised at this announcement, as most expected a Cabinet expansion that could include up to 15 new entrants, rather than a simple reshuffle of portfolios. In addition, PM Manmohan Singh was widely reported to be overwhelmed by his workload and eager to shed Foreign Affairs. Local scuttlebutt has it, that the PM was over-ruled by the Congress leadership, which was unwilling for now to fill what Natwar Singh still calls "his Ministry." Congress insider and Sonia Gandhi confidant Rashid Alvi told us that Congress still hopes to expand the Cabinet and bring in new faces after the Winter Session of Parliament ends on December 23. Singh's failure to press a Cabinet expansion is likely to be viewed by many as yet another sign of his government's relative "weakness," as Congress is confronted by myriad political problems (septel). This anticlimactic step is another sign of a party trying to cope with multiple challenges.
BLAKE